

North Korea: The Party Elite and the Succession Issue



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A Research Paper

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A Research Paper

This paper was prepared by [redacted] Office of
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[redacted] Office of Central Reference. [redacted]

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**North Korea:
The Party Elite and
the Succession Issue**

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Summary

*Information available
as of 1 September 1983
was used in this report.*

President Kim Il-song rules North Korea with an iron hand, and the personality cult surrounding him has grown to unprecedented heights. Within the North, the exploits of the "Great Leader" are synonymous with the history of the country. His speeches and on-the-spot guidance are immediately transformed into party policy. Kim Il-song is now attempting to develop this same aura of infallible leadership for his son and heir apparent, Kim Chong-il.

Kim Il-song, mindful of events in the USSR and China following the deaths of Stalin and Mao, clearly hopes that installing his son Kim Chong-il as his successor will forestall any rapid dismantling of his own policies and personality cult. Most significant for US and South Korean interests, an orderly transfer of power to Kim Chong-il is, we judge, the outcome most likely to ensure the continuation of a hostile and militant regime in P'yongyang—a regime that clings to the belief it can achieve reunification of the peninsula on its own terms, by force if necessary.

Despite the highly personalized leadership styles of the two Kims, the Korean Workers Party—as the ruling Communist Party is titled—remains a vital instrument of control. Borrowing from both the Chinese and Soviet models, the party has its own codified rules, complex structure, and operational norms. With over 2 million members, the party counts in its ranks one out of every 10 persons in North Korea. The Political Bureau of the Central Committee sits at the apex of this large party structure.

In the Political Bureau the influence of the veteran guerrilla leaders who rose to power with Kim Il-song is waning and is likely to decline precipitously in the next several years. The influence of leaders in the 50-to-60-year age bracket will grow accordingly. The regime is taking steps to manage carefully this generational change within the elite. Some senior leaders in critical positions are being eased into retirement. The size of the Political Bureau has been increased, thus allowing for an infusion of new blood.

Nevertheless, we judge that Kim Chong-il's supporters are attempting to use the expansion of the Political Bureau as an opportunity to strengthen support for the younger Kim's succession. Some of the second-generation leaders may indeed owe their current positions in part to their endorsement

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of Kim Chong-il and the succession plan. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] We believe, however, that some second-generation leaders who have worked their way up through the postwar system—while loyal to Kim Il-song—may not in all cases be indebted to Kim Chong-il.

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Political maneuvering is likely to intensify as Kim Il-song's passing from the scene draws nearer. Given the many unknowns in the leadership equation in P'yongyang, changes in the alignment of the Political Bureau are likely to evoke quite diverse interpretations on the part of outside observers.

This study seeks to shed some light on the political alignment and relative importance of the 32 officials, who, along with Kim Il-song and Kim Chong-il, currently make up the bureau. It begins by identifying the principal interest groups or factions on the Political Bureau. These include:

- Veteran guerrilla fighters.
- Second-generation leaders.
- The military.
- The technocrats.
- Province leaders and others.

The study then analyzes Kim Chong-il's position and discusses some of the methods—and the pitfalls—in attempting to identify his allies on the Political Bureau.

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Table 1
Institutional Representation
on the North Korean Political Bureau

Political Bureau ^a	Other Party Positions	Government/Military
Presidium Kim Il-song Kim Chong-il Kim Il O Chin-u Yi Chong-ok	General Secretary Secretary	President/Commander in chief Vice President Defense Minister Premier
Full members Pak Song-chol Yim Chun-chu So Chol Kim Chung-nim Kim Yong-nam Yon Hyong-muk Kim Hwan O Paek-yong Chon Mun-sop Kang Song-san O Kuk-yol Paek Hak-nim Choe Yong-nim So Yun-sok	Control Committee Secretary Secretary Secretary Department Director P'yongyang City	Vice President Vice President Vice Premier First Vice Premier Chief of General Staff Vice Minister of Defense
Alternate members Ho Tam Hyon Mu-kwang Chon Pyong-ho Choe Kwang Chong Chun-ki Chong Kyong-hui Kong Chin-tae Kye Ung-tae Yi Kun-mo Cho Se-ung Kim Tu-nam Kang Hui-won Kim Kang-hwan Hong Song-nam Yi Son-sil	Secretary Nampo City North Hamgyong Province Department Director Chongjin City South Pyongan Province	Vice Premier Vice Premier Vice Premier Vice Premier Vice Premier Deputy Chief of General Staff

^a Approximate order of rank.

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The Political Bureau: Major Interest Groups¹

Because President Kim Il-song dominates the political scene in North Korea, other leaders on the Political Bureau tend to remain in the background. As a result, it is difficult to identify factions or interest groups. Because of the lack of reliable biographical data, there are problems even distinguishing officials by profession or age group.

Veteran Guerrilla Fighters

One group that clearly stands apart is made up of the veterans who participated with Kim Il-song in the guerrilla campaigns against the Japanese occupation forces in the 1930s. The regime itself has called attention to the close-knit identity of this group by publishing periodic remembrances by these guerrilla veterans. The group includes eight full members of the Political Bureau. They are, in rank order, Vice President Kim Il, Defense Minister O Chin-u, Vice President Pak Song-chol, Vice President Yim Chun-chu, Control Committee Chairman So Chol, Gen. O Paek-yong, and Colonel Generals Chon Mun-sop and Paek Hak-nim. Presumably they constitute a solid core of loyal support on the Political Bureau. All of these officials, with the exception of Chon Mun-sop and Paek Hak-nim, are over 70 years old.

Defense Minister *O Chin-u* clearly is the most powerful military leader in North Korea today. Elevated to chief of the general staff in the late 1960s and to Defense Minister in 1976, General O represents continuity within the armed forces hierarchy.

Gen. *O Paek-yong*, although relatively inactive, serves on the government's prestigious National Defense Commission. He is believed to supervise North Korea's large paramilitary and reserve forces. Col. Gen. *Chon Mun-sop*, Kim's bodyguard in the early

years, is believed to control the internal security forces responsible for providing protection for the President and his son. Chon has not appeared in public since September 1982 and may be in poor health.

Col. Gen. *Paek Hak-nim*, although a guerrilla veteran, was elevated to the Political Bureau only in 1978. He is a vice minister of defense. In the fall of 1981 Paek headed an official North Korean delegation to a number of countries in Africa that have military cooperation agreements with P'yongyang. North Korea has dispatched a number of military advisers to several of the countries visited by General Paek.

So Chol, as chairman of the Control Commission, enforces party discipline. He is not an active military officer and he does not control any security forces. Nevertheless, he is in a position to wield influence because of the discretionary punitive powers of his commission. For example, political foes can be fully prosecuted for party wrongdoings while allies can merely be admonished or let off with minimum disciplinary action.

Kim Il, *Pak Song-chol*, and *Yim Chun-chu*, who serve as vice presidents, appear to perform mainly ceremonial tasks and also lead delegations to foreign countries. Although these individuals at one time may have held considerable power, they have, in effect, been moved into semiretirement. Kim Il's health, in particular, is poor.

Second-Generation Leaders

About a dozen members of the Political Bureau could be described as second-generation leaders. Most are 50 to 60 years old. They have made their way up the ladder in the postwar years. For the most part, they do not appear to have suffered setbacks along the way.

¹ Detailed information on the organization and workings of the Political Bureau is contained in the appendix

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North Korean Party Elite



Camera Press ©

Kim Il-song

Veteran Guerrilla Fighters



Kim Il



O Chin-u



Pak Song-chol



Yim Chun-chu



Franz Furst ©

So Chol



O Paek-yong



Chon Mun-sop



Paek Hak-nim

The Technocrats



Yi Chong-ok



Yon Hyong-muk



Hyon Mu-kwang



Kye Ung-tae

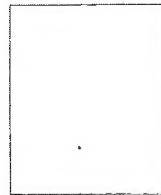


Kong Chin-tae

Military Leaders (Second-Generation)



O Kuk-yol



no photo

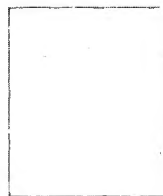
Kim Kang-hwan

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North Korean Party Elite (continued)
*Kim Chong-il***Second-Generation Leaders***Kim Chung-nim**Kim Yong-nam**Choe Yong-nim*

no photo

*So Yun-sok**Kang Song-san**Kim Hwan**Ho Tam**Chong Chun-ki*

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Kim Tu-nam

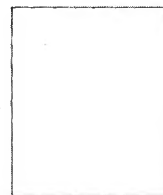
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*Chon Pyong-ho***Province Chiefs and Others***Yi Kun-mo*

no photo

Cho Se-ung

no photo

Hong Song-nam*Kang Hui-won**Choe Kwang*

no photo

Chong Kyong-hui

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Yi Son-sil

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Five out of 12 of these second-generation officials hold positions in the central party apparatus. *Kim Chung-nim*, in his early sixties, is party secretary responsible for North Korea's campaign of political action and subversion against South Korea. Except for a brief hiatus in the mid-1970s, he has held this assignment since 1969. Kim has been characterized

In point of fact, P'yongyang's attempts to build a viable clandestine organization in the South have proved largely ineffective. Kim Chung-nim is also believed to be in charge of all North Korean intelligence operations.

Kim Yong-nam, in his fifties, is one of North Korea's leading foreign affairs experts. As the director of the party's International Department since the early 1970s, Kim has played a major role in opening the door to official relations with many foreign countries by initiating contacts with leftist parties and other influential groups. Kim has served as a party secretary since 1975. In July 1980 Kim met with US Representative Stephen Solarz, the first American political figure to visit North Korea since the war.

Poor health recently kept Kim sidelined for about eight months.

Much less is known about the three other central party officials. *Choe Yong-nim*, who first joined the Political Bureau in 1980 as an alternate member, was promoted to full membership in August 1982. In his fifties, Choe is the director of an unidentified department of the Central Committee. *Kim Tu-nam* and *Chon Pyong-ho*, both in their fifties, were named alternate members of the Political Bureau in 1982. Kim is director of an unidentified department of the Central Committee; Chon's position is unknown.

So Yun-sok, also in his fifties, has been chief secretary of the P'yongyang City party committee since 1978. The P'yongyang post has served in the past as a springboard for higher positions in the central power structure; First Vice Premier Kang Song-san, for example, held this post in the early 1970s. Like Choe Yong-nim, So was promoted to full membership in August 1982. Both men merit close watching.

Four of the 12 second-generation leaders on the Political Bureau are vice premiers in the State Administration Council—North Korea's cabinet. *Kang Song-san*, in his fifties, was designated "first" vice premier in August 1982. He appears to have assumed much of the responsibility for supervising the economy from Premier Yi Chong-ok. Kang has served in a variety of party and government posts. He reportedly is related by marriage to Kim Il-song.

Vice Premier *Kim Hwan*, like Kang, is a full member of the Political Bureau. Kim, who has specialized in heavy industry, was only recently transferred from party secretary to vice premier.

Kim Hwan, who is about 50, has had a meteoric rise since the mid-1970s. His assignment as vice premier could result in a sharpened rivalry with Kang Song-san.

Vice Premier *Ho Tam* has been Foreign Minister since 1970. About 54, Ho has played a key role in carrying out North Korea's ambitious efforts to expand its diplomatic representation in the Third World. Ho has been North Korea's principal contact with the Nonaligned Movement and he is the only Political Bureau official to have visited the United States, where he attended the UN General Assembly session in the fall of 1977.

Educated at Moscow University in the late 1940s, Ho reportedly is related by marriage to Kim Il-song.

Vice Premier *Chong Chun-ki*, in his late fifties, is the regime's chief spokesman. He has traveled extensively and is said to have a good memory for facts and statistics. His career has been devoted almost exclusively to propaganda activities. His political status has not changed much since he first joined the Political Bureau as an alternate member in the early 1970s.

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Table 2
Foreign Travel of Political Bureau ^a

	Communist World	Non-Communist
Kim Il	2	0
O Chin-u	4	2
Yi Chong-ok	7	6
Pak Song-chol	9	16
Yim Chun-chu	4	2
So Chol	8	0
Kim Chung-nim	1	0
Kim Yong-nam	14	14
Yon Hyong-muk	0	0
Kim Hwan	5	5
O Paek-yong	0	0
Chon Mun-sop	2	0
Kang Song-san	1	0
O Kuk-yol	3	0
Paek Hak-nim	1	2
Choe Yong-nim	0	0
So Yun-sok	2	0
Ho Tam	15	18
Hyon Mu-kwang	0	0
Chon Pyong-ho	0	0
Choe Kwang	0	1
Chong Chun-ki	4	18
Chong Kyong-hui	0	0
Kong Chin-tae	12	11
Kye Ung-tae	7	8
Yi Kun-mo	1	0
Cho Se-ung	0	0
Kim Tu-nam	0	0
Kang Hui-won	3	0
Kim Kang-hwan	0	0
Hong Song-nam	1	0
Yi Son-sil	0	0

^a North Korea may be isolated from the rest of the world community, but its vigorous diplomatic competition with South Korea keeps its leading officials on the road. This table reflects the number of publicized foreign visits by Political Bureau members and alternates over the past 10 years.

Influence of the Military

In North Korea the military and security services have always had a strong voice in the Political Bureau and other leadership councils. The military's influence derives from the early days of the regime when Kim and his partisans battled the Japanese and when Kim in 1950 tried to seize control of the peninsula by force. It has been reinforced in subsequent years both by Kim's continued adherence to a confrontational policy toward the South and by the heavy allocation of manpower and material resources to sustain North Korea's extensive military forces.

As noted earlier, four of the eight guerrilla veterans (O Chin-u, O Paek-yong, Chon Mun-sop and Paek Hak-nim) are still on active duty. In addition, among the second-generation leaders on the Political Bureau, the armed forces are represented by the chief of the general staff and his ranking deputy.

Col. Gen. *O Kuk-yol*, in his fifties, has served as Chief of the General Staff since 1979 and as a full member of the Political Bureau since 1980. He apparently was promoted over a number of more senior officers. As a career Air Force officer, O Kuk-yol's appointment is viewed as another indication that P'yongyang intends to increase its emphasis on joint service operations. O Kuk-yol reportedly was also a classmate of Kim Chong-il's at the Mangyongdae Institute. According to some accounts, he is the nephew of Gen. O Chin-u.

Lt. Gen. *Kim Kang-hwan* is the First Deputy Chief of General Staff. Not much is known about Kim's background, although he is believed to be in his fifties. Kim Kang-hwan appears to be the only active duty officer among the 15 alternate members on the Political Bureau.

The influence of the military goes beyond the number of uniformed personnel on the Political Bureau. The armed forces are viewed as a major avenue for

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upward mobility in North Korea. Many officers reportedly retire early to pursue lucrative careers in the party and government. Undoubtedly the shared experiences and close ties developed in the military profession are carried along by these officials throughout their careers.

The Technocrats

In North Korea the role played by technocrats in the Political Bureau appears to be quite different from that seen in the leading organs of other Communist societies. It is a common phenomenon in Communist societies that, as the state develops and grows more complex, officials with special technical skills begin to exercise a growing influence in the leadership. In North Korea, however, the development of a highly skilled group of technocrats in the Political Bureau and the society at large has been sharply retarded by excessive adherence to Kim Il-song's widely publicized ideology of self-reliance or *chuche*.

Kim Il-song frequently has reiterated the need to develop technological skills and to apply selectively foreign experiences to North Korea's development problems. But these exhortations are largely swept aside by the far greater emphasis on self-reliance as the only way to maintain independence and sovereignty. Kim's *chuche* policy, first enunciated in the 1950s, was given added impetus following the Sino-Soviet split in the early 1960s. By the late 1960s, North Korea virtually ended the practice of sending officials and students to other Communist states for advanced training, although some North Korean specialists apparently are still receiving training at a Soviet nuclear research institute.

As a result, foreign-trained technocrats are becoming a vanishing species in North Korea. The impact has been widespread. [redacted]

[redacted] North Korea is relying on production techniques that are often 20 years behind the times. There were numerous accounts in the 1970s that industrial equipment ordered from abroad remained unopened or unassembled because North Korean technicians lacked the necessary skills or were prevented from seeking assistance from their foreign counterparts.

A number of veteran technocrats accompanied the Kim Il-song regime into power or were trained abroad in the 1950s. They are valued by the regime for the competence they bring to bear on managing what has become an increasingly complex economy. But these technocrats have no constituency and no independent power base. They frequently have served as scapegoats for errors made by overzealous party bureaucrats.

Premier *Yi Chong-ok*, in his late sixties, is the best known of North Korea's technocrats. In the mid-1950s, Yi, as chairman of the State Planning Committee, was instrumental in organizing North Korea's first five-year plan. Yi held several important posts in the heavy industry sector during the seven-year plan in the 1960s, but Yi was demoted when the plan had to be extended by three years to reach its assigned goals.

Yi regained favor in the early 1970s, and in 1977 he was named Premier to provide leadership for North Korea's current seven-year plan (1978-84). As a measure of his prestige, Yi was included in the five-man Presidium of the Political Bureau organized at the Sixth Party Congress. Yi received his training in Manchuria at the Harbin Technical College.

Party secretary *Yon Hyong-muk* is an industrial specialist and economic planner who has held positions both in light and heavy industry. In his late fifties, Yon has the longest continuous service on the party Secretariat. He has frequently accompanied both Kim Il-song and Kim Chong-il on inspection tours. Yon acquired technical training in Czechoslovakia in the 1950s.

Party secretary *Hyon Mu-kwang*, about 70, is one of North Korea's most durable industrial management specialists. Hyon has served as an alternate member of the Political Bureau on an on-again, off-again basis for the past 20 years. He reached a personal peak in 1970 as party secretary for industry when he ranked 12th in the overall leadership. Hyon was assigned as a

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provincial leader in the heavily industrialized northeast region from 1977 to 1981, but he returned to the Secretariat by late 1981.

Vice Premier *Kye Ung-tae*, in his sixties, is the regime's leading foreign trade specialist. As Minister of Foreign Trade from 1967 to 1977, Kye presided over a rapid growth in North Korea's commercial relations with the non-Communist world. Kye has had to deal with irate trading partners displeased with P'yongyang's unwillingness even to discuss measures to remedy its persistent foreign indebtedness. His courteous and tactful style have helped ease tensions. Kye studied in both Manchuria and the USSR. Kye became the first political casualty following the 1980 party congress; he was demoted in October 1981 from full to alternate membership on the Political Bureau. Kye's duties as vice premier do not appear to have been affected, however.

Vice Premier *Kong Chin-tae*, like Kye Ung-tae, has spent most of his career managing North Korea's foreign economic relations. As Minister of External Economic Affairs during most of the 1970s, Kong traveled extensively to negotiate foreign aid agreements. About 60, he has been described as a tactful and capable economist. In 1982 Kong was named chairman of a newly created Trade Committee, suggesting at the time that he was assuming greater control in that long-troubled sector from Kye Ung-tae. More recently, Kong has been inactive and may have been demoted.

Province Leaders and Others

As the North Korean economy has become more complex, P'yongyang has moved to strengthen economic management in the provinces. In 1981 North Korea instituted a new system of economic guidance committees at the provincial level and gave these committees certain functions and perquisites previously reserved for the central bureaucracy.

On the political side, too, the authority of the province chiefs has been upgraded in recent years. Four local party chiefs concurrently hold alternate membership on the Political Bureau. They are: *Cho Se-ung* (North

Hamgyong Province), *Hong Song-nam* (South Pyongan Province), *Yi Kun-mo* (Nampo City), and *Kang Hui-won* (Chongjin City). Nampo and Chongjin, because of their size and industrial development, are treated administratively like provinces.

These local leaders, unlike P'yongyang City chief So Yun-sok who is often seen with the central leadership, spend most of their time in their own bailiwicks. They are outside the mainstream. A provincial post can, nonetheless, serve as a steppingstone for higher advancement in the party.

A few officials on the Political Bureau do not fit neatly into any of the groupings. Vice Premier *Choe Kwang* is a former senior military leader who has recently been rehabilitated after undergoing a long period of reeducation. *Chong Kyong-hui*, the only woman of the Political Bureau, has a long association with anti-South Korean operations; her influence in the inner councils of the party is not clear. Lastly, *Yi Son-sil* remains largely a question mark. Because he makes only rare appearances, it is difficult to determine if he is still an alternate member of the Political Bureau.

Kim Chong-il's Position

The regime used the Sixth Party Congress in October 1980 as the occasion to unveil publicly Kim Il-song's scheme to install his eldest son, Kim Chong-il, as his successor. The younger Kim, making his first publicized appearance, was designated fourth-ranked member of the Political Bureau. Kim Chong-il also was awarded leading positions on both the party Secretariat and the party Military Commission—a distinction shared only by Kim Il-song.

The Secretariat is headed by General Secretary Kim Il-song. Kim Chong-il, as the ranking secretary under the elder Kim probably exercises control over organizational and personnel affairs. He is in a unique position to influence promotions and demotions within

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the party. Kim Chong-il's membership on the Military Commission is undoubtedly intended to demonstrate his credentials as a military as well as party leader.

As the fourth-ranked member of the Political Bureau, Kim Chong-il gained membership on the five-member Presidium. The implications for his eventual succession are obvious; the other four members of the Presidium—Kim Il-song, Kim Il, O Chin-u, and Yi Chong-ok—are all in their seventies. Since the congress, he has moved up to second place in periodic leadership turnouts, bypassing Defense Minister O Chin-u in 1981 and moving ahead of senior Vice President Kim Il by early 1983.

Kim Chong-il's Allies

Kim Il-song's unprecedented hereditary succession scheme, although kept under wraps until 1980, had become public knowledge by the late 1970s. During the 1970s outside observers tended to view every promotion and demotion in the party hierarchy as directly related to the succession issue. It was widely assumed, for example, that any North Korean official whose career prospered after 1973—the year the succession scheme moved into high gear—was a supporter of Kim Chong-il.

This tendency was particularly strong if the official was relatively young. The notion that these officials were riding on Kim Chong-il's coattails does not square with subsequent developments. Several officials who rose to prominence in the 1973-75 period subsequently fell into disfavor.

The Political Bureau announced at the Sixth Congress in October 1980 showed a marked increase in size from its predecessors. Nineteen full members and 15 alternate members were named compared with only 11 full members and four alternates named at each of the three previous party congresses. Most of the 34 officials had in fact been appointed to the Political Bureau during the 1970s, but it was a major step for the 1980 Congress to formalize the expansion.

We believe that Kim Chong-il and his supporters used the congress as an occasion to reward existing allies and to gain new ones.

There remains, nevertheless, the knotty problem of distinguishing supporters of Kim Chong-il from those who are passive or even hostile toward the succession scheme

Nepotism is commonplace in North Korea and it adds another factor to the leadership equation. Vice President Pak Song-chol, First Vice Premier Kang Song-san, Vice Premier Ho Tam, and Chongjin City chief secretary Kang Hui-won reportedly are all related by marriage to the senior Kim. The younger Kim presumably can rely on them as allies.

Family relationships are complex, however. Kim Chong-il's mother died in 1949, and Kim Il-song remarried and has additional children by that marriage.

Now that Kim Chong-il is appearing in public, there is a somewhat better basis for determining at least some of his putative supporters. Since the party congress, Kim Chong-il has personally led 12 publicized inspection tours in North Korea. He is invariably accompanied on these visits by several other Political Bureau officials. We know that these appearances are closely scrutinized not only by outsiders but also by the North Korean officials themselves. In some cases the nature of the event may dictate which officials are to be present. But it is reasonable to assume that officials who appear repeatedly with Kim Chong-il are close allies or at least willing to be perceived as such.

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The following tabulation reflects the number of times individual Political Bureau officials accompanied Kim Chong-il on visits between May 1981 and June 1983:

Defense Minister O Chin-u	9
Party Secretary Yon Hyong-muk	8
Foreign Minister Ho Tam	7
Party Secretary Kim Chung-nim	6
Party Secretary Kim Yong-nam	4

In addition, four other Political Bureau officials have accompanied Kim Chong-il on one or two occasions.

Another method of assessing the attitude of individual North Korean leaders toward the succession issue is to examine their public statements. Since the party congress, North Korean officials have been routinely praising the role of the "party center"—an honorific expression used as a cover term for Kim Chong-il. This cover term was useful to the regime before the public unveiling of Kim Chong-il, and it is still used in much of the media discussion about domestic affairs.

A few Political Bureau officials have gone beyond the routine expressions of support for Kim Chong-il. For example, Defense Minister O Chin-u was very expansive in his evaluation of the younger Kim's visit to China in June 1983. O Chin-u disclosed details about the visit not previously publicized by P'yongyang.

Party Secretary Kim Yong-nam was the official selected in March 1982 to present Kim Chong-il's first major publicized theoretical work, a so-called treatise on elder Kim's *chuche* ideology. Significantly, both O Chin-u and Kim Yong-nam are among those who have often accompanied the son on inspection tours.

Impact of Generational Change

If Kim Chong-il is to inherit the mantle of leadership from his father, he will have to outmaneuver not one but two generations of leaders in the North Korean Political Bureau. There seems little doubt now that the son has crossed the first hurdle—the veteran guerrilla leaders of Kim Il-song's generation. O Chin-u, one of the most active and powerful among

The visit to China by Comrade Kim Chong-il, the leader of our party, some time ago at the kind invitation of respected Comrade Hu Yaobang marked a new milestone in keeping bright the glorious tradition of the Korea-China friendship, which was sealed in blood in the flames of the arduous revolutionary struggle and has withstood the grim trial of history.

During his recent visit to China Comrade Kim Chong-il had historic meetings with respected Comrades Hu Yaobang, Deng Xiaoping, Li Xiannian, Zhao Ziyang, Peng Zhen, Deng Yingchao, and nearly all other leading cadres of the Chinese party and government and had talks with them in a sincere, friendly, and comradely atmosphere and had important conversations and was accorded a cordial hospitality and warm welcome by the Chinese party and people during his tour of Beijing and local areas.

The recently held seventh plenary meeting of the sixth Central Committee of the Korean Workers Party expressed great joy at the distinguished contributions made by the China visit of Comrade Kim Chong-il to the cause of further strengthening and developing the militant friendship and revolutionary solidarity between the parties and peoples of Korea and China.

O Chin-u, 11 July 1983, at a reception at the Chinese Embassy in P'yongyang

this group, has clearly endorsed the succession through both word and deed. Senior Vice President Kim Il—the only veteran with anything approaching an independent stature—has deferred to the son in the highly symbolic leadership rankings.

The principal challenge is likely to come from the group of second-generation leaders on the Political Bureau. These leaders are too young to have been part

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of Kim Il-song's guerrilla campaigns and yet old enough to have launched their careers in the postwar bureaucracy before Kim Chong-il began his apprenticeship in 1973. Some of these leaders have only recently joined the Political Bureau. They may have had to pledge their loyalty to Kim Chong-il as part of the price of joining the party elite. But others may not be indebted to Kim Chong-il. Although loyal to Kim Il-song, they may be inclined to push their own careers forward after the elder Kim leaves the scene.

Only Kim Chong-il has been noted making the kind of publicized inspection tours long associated with his father's reign. And only Kim Chong-il has published major works, which are being held up as guidance in the manner of Kim Il-song's own writings.

demotions in North Korea are probably the result of a mix of factors involving past political debts, bureaucratic infighting, and complex trade-offs.

Significant events in North Korea's domestic calendar over the next two years are likely to heighten maneuvering within the leadership. Next year marks the end of North Korea's current seven-year economic plan. The transition from one plan period to another is often accompanied by changes in the government leadership. In 1985 the regime may hold elections for a new national assembly and convene a party congress. Any one of these events could serve as an occasion for Kim Chong-il's supporters to make a major move to further solidify the son's position as heir apparent. If such a move is undertaken, it will undoubtedly be played out in the ranks of the Political Bureau.

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Prospects

The size of the Political Bureau appears to have stabilized at roughly 34 members and alternates. The institutional representation also seems to be relatively fixed, with officials in the central party apparatus holding more positions on the Political Bureau than the government and military. Second-generation political leaders are taking the dominant role in running affairs of the country.

With the old guard revolutionaries retiring, political maneuvering at the Political Bureau level is likely to intensify in the next several years.

Kim Chong-il and his supporters have to reckon with the possibility that the elder Kim's health could deteriorate at any time.

We anticipate that Kim Chong-il's supporters will continue to strive to place as many adherents as possible on the Political Bureau. It would be unwise, however, to view every new face as a loyal ally of the son. As in any political system, promotions and

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Appendix

Organization and Function of the Political Bureau

The Political Bureau is made up of the highest ranking members of the Central Committee. It conducts the party's business between the meetings of the much larger Central Committee, which holds two plenary sessions a year. The Political Bureau formulates all policy on political and social affairs, economic, defense, and internal security matters. It meets in unpublicized sessions about once a week.

The Political Bureau, in addition to its role as the principal policymaking organization, is also the chief organization for implementing policy. It exercises control through a full-time party Secretariat and a number of functionally organized departments under the Secretariat. The Political Bureau also wields power through other specialized organizations in the central party apparatus, such as the Military Commission (military affairs), the Control Committee (party discipline), and the Liaison Department (anti-South Korea operations). The officials heading these central party organizations are usually members of the Political Bureau.

As in the case of other ruling Communist Party organizations, many officials on the Political Bureau also hold positions in the central government, in the armed forces, or in the provinces. This overlapping representation is one method used by the party to ensure that the bureaucracy remains responsive to party control. In particular, the number of cabinet officers and province chiefs on the Political Bureau has increased markedly in recent years.

The Political Bureau consists of both full members and alternate members. Alternate members are non-voting members, but that is probably not an important distinction since voting generally is to rubberstamp Kim Il-song's decisions. Any official aspiring to full membership on the Political Bureau apparently is required first to serve at least some months as an alternate member.

Over the years the formal structure of the Political Bureau has undergone some minor changes. From 1966 to 1980 it was known by the title of Political Committee. From time to time an executive committee is formed within the Political Bureau. The Sixth Party Congress, for example, designated the top five full members as the Presidium of the Political Bureau. Similar changes have been noted in both the USSR and China. The formation of the North Korean Presidium apparently serves to further centralize power at the apex of the decisionmaking structure.

Less Turnover in Recent Years

North Korea as a rule only reveals the full lineup of the Political Bureau at major party gatherings, such as at its infrequent party congresses. The party congress is largely ceremonial, comprising both party leaders and party activists from across the country. Party regulations call for a congress to convene once every five years, but in fact 10 years lapsed between the Fifth Congress in 1970 and the Sixth Congress in October 1980.

The makeup of the North Korean Political Bureau, like its Soviet and Chinese counterparts, undergoes numerous changes between party congresses. On occasion, these changes are formally announced at plenary meetings of the Central Committee. It is far more common, however, for the regime to disclose these changes in a piecemeal way at selected leadership turnouts.

From time to time the party hierarchy in North Korea has been jolted by a major purge. During the mid-1950s there were several upheavals as Kim Il-song moved to consolidate his control over the various

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factions within the leadership. There were two major shakeups in the leadership in the mid- and late 1960s. These purges coincided more or less with the beginning and ending of a period of heightened militancy in North Korea's campaign of harassment and provocation against South Korea and the United States.

There was a significant expansion of the Political Bureau—from 15 to 34 members and alternate members—between the Fifth Party Congress and the Sixth Congress in 1980. The new members were added incrementally over the decade; most were party and government bureaucrats. There were no leadership purges in the 1970s comparable to those in the 1950s and 1960s, thus providing for a considerable measure of leadership continuity.

Relative stability in the leadership has continued into the 1980s. The status of 27 of the 34 members and alternate members identified in 1980 has remained unchanged. Continuity among the 19 full members is particularly strong. At a party plenum in August 1982 two alternate members were promoted to full membership to fill the vacancies created by the death of one member and the demotion of another to alternate status.

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